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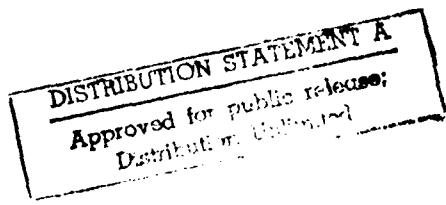
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MODELING SOVIET DEFENSE DECISIONMAKING

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December 1980

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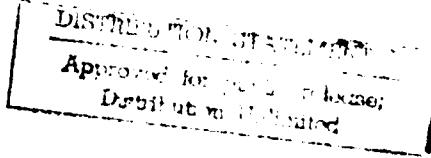
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INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

My goal in this paper is to set out a simple model of decisionmaking in Soviet defense to help clarify the subject, but also to draw out disagreements and perhaps resolve misunderstandings by offering a structured, abstracted description. In this modeling effort, I purposely keep things simple, restricting the number of variables and interactions in order to focus on the chief effects. Sparseness may help illuminate better than detail at this stage of our knowledge.

This effort was stimulated by problems I observed in some of the analytical literature on Soviet defense decisionmaking, and especially in informal statements and comments on the subject. These problems included inappropriate and confused imputations of influences, effects, and relationships. Political decisions on strategic policy, for example, were attributed to the military. Activities engaged in by ministries or plant managers were ascribed to the ruling circles in the party. The state bureaucracies' actions in solving complex, technical problems or in implementing policies were interpreted as interest group politics. The balancing of tradeoffs in large, uncertain, and complex projects by the political leaders was treated in terms of organizational processes.

This paper was originally prepared for the Naval Postgraduate School/UCLA Center for International and Strategic Affairs Conference on Soviet National Security Decisionmaking, Monterey, California, August 1980.



The analytical problems that I saw, in my own work and in some of the work of others, seemed to rest on a confused view of the flow of the decision process--a flow where different parties do different things at different times--and on a lack of care in ascribing processes to actors. The fact that this flow is different in the Soviet Union from other countries, particularly the United States, and that it is also different in defense from other Soviet sectors further complicated the issue.

Briefly, my argument divides the actors into two groups: high-level and low-level. Politics colors behavior among the high-level participants. Lower-level behavior is characterized by bureaucratic processes. The linkages between the two levels are critical to understanding outcomes. The things that each of the levels do and don't do define decisionmaking practices. Explanation of these practices requires our being able to separate those aspects of behavior arising from politics, bureaucratic activities, Soviet and Russian culture, and the peculiar organizational structure of the political-defense-military-industrial complex.

Before proceeding, it will be useful to clarify my use of the term "decisionmaking." It is broader than the dictionary definition: "the process of arriving at a solution that ends uncertainty or dispute, or that makes a choice or judgement." I enlarge this to include all the processes that generate outcomes. This recognizes the possibility of "decisions" or outcomes without decisionmakers, of decisions without results, and of results that may deviate considerably from the goals intended by decisionmakers. In this sense, the passive voice, so often blue-pencilled by my editors, is appropriate. The use of the active

voice would mistakenly suggest, in many instances, the existence of high-level, purposeful agents who decide. "Decisionmaking" therefore involves the whole panoply of actors and activities: high and low levels; systemic incentives and constraints; formation of policy and doctrine; information flows; power and authority; organizational processes; bureaucratic politics; and--even--unitary, rational behavior.

HIGH-LEVEL/LOW-LEVEL: PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR

For analytical purposes, I divide the actors in the Soviet defense decisionmaking process into two levels: high and low. The high-level actors comprise the Politburo, Central Committee Secretariat, and Presidium of the Council of Ministers. The lower-level actors include the production ministries, Defense Ministry, and Party organizations below the Central Committee. A few organizations bridge the gap between these levels and coordinate lower level activities: the Military Industrial Commission being one of these. At the top, the Defense Council may consolidate the high-level views.[1]

These two classes of actors play different roles and respond to diverse classes of forces and influences. The high levels have authority to make decisions. They hold power. They can decide, intervene, review, accept, decline. They often face problems of conflicting goals that require political action to resolve. The lower levels act, implement, generate information (from their activities and from analyses); they face problems that require high-level solution; they put forward proposals, initiatives, alternatives; they generate conflict among themselves that often must be resolved by political decisions.

The high levels produce policies, but in most cases do not have the tools or capabilities to carry them out. Theirs is the role to decide but to decide what, and why? The subjects, the information, the arguments usually come up from below. The totalitarian model recognizes and

[1]Some writers, Checinski (1980) for example, suggest that the Defense Council may be superior to the Politburo, at least for those questions dealing with defense matters.

highlights the power and authority, but often ignores the power inherent in implementation and in the generation of alternatives.

The higher level organs are dominated by politics, personalities, and widely shared values and objectives as well as strongly held individual goals arising from the specialized functions of high-level actors. Politburo members or Party Secretaries therefore possess specific goals and values and general, shared goals and values. Sometimes the specific goals conflict with each other-- but not always. Not every problem requires political resolution. Sometimes specific goals conflict with general goals--but not always. Issues coming to the top may just concern the responsibilities of one or two senior individuals. Or, one of the subgoals may assume such overriding importance that all would accept a resultant policy, though it harmed particular goals. Or, an issue may be of such central, national importance that the ruling elite could act as one. (Figure 1 sketches this process of goal conflict and transformation.)

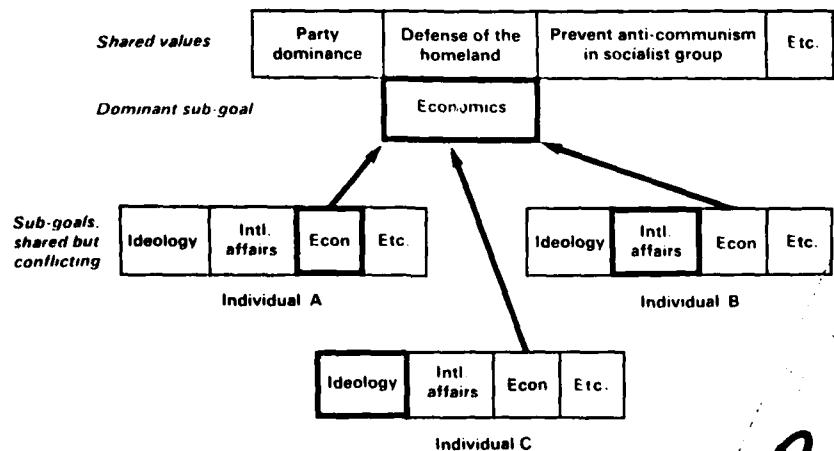


Figure 1. Goal conflict and dominance

To make the above argument more concrete, consider Valenta's (1978) analysis of the Czechoslovakian intervention. In the early stages of the crisis, specific goals held by functional specialists came into conflict with each other. Those pushing for intervention were concerned with imported ideological infections, or the spread of political ferment across the border into the Ukraine, or the internal security problems created by Czech dismemberment of KGB activities in Czechoslovakia. The noninterventionists were worried about the effects of armed intervention on relations with other Communist Parties, or future trade negotiations, or international relations with the non-Communist world. Each of the members of the ruling elite probably shared all of these concerns to some degree, but their individual responsibilities or personalities led them to emphasize specific goals in the earlier phases of debate over the emerging crisis. These individuals probably shared, also, a set of higher goals--"images of national security." (Valenta, 1978, p. 5.) According to Valenta, one such image was: "The Soviet Union should prevent the spread of anti-communism in the socialist commonwealth. Thus, the restoration of a multiparty system within any of the Warsaw Pact countries would jeopardize the responsibility and control of the Communist Party and must not be allowed." In the later phase of the crisis, this goal appeared about to be violated, and the high-level actors responded in a unified way to prevent it. Only when the general, shared goals dominated the specific goals did the non-interventionists agree to intervene. It was not that the interventionists prevailed politically in a demonstration of power against the others' conflicting goals, but rather the shared goals came into play and dominated the

rest.

The decision process in the Czechoslovakian intervention was, at first, describable by a bureaucratic politics model. It was then transformed into one involving the unified action of the state. In this case, the models are not alternative descriptions or explanations, but rather describe different phenomena. To extend this line of reasoning, we turn now to the linkages between the higher and lower levels.

Most decisions (i.e., outcomes) in Soviet military decisionmaking originate in the bureaucracies; they are consequently routine and bureaucratic. Some of these decisions, however, are settled at higher levels: they may be forced up to the top by the nature of the system; or are drawn upward by routine methods; or are wrenched up by purposeful interventions. (See figure 2.)

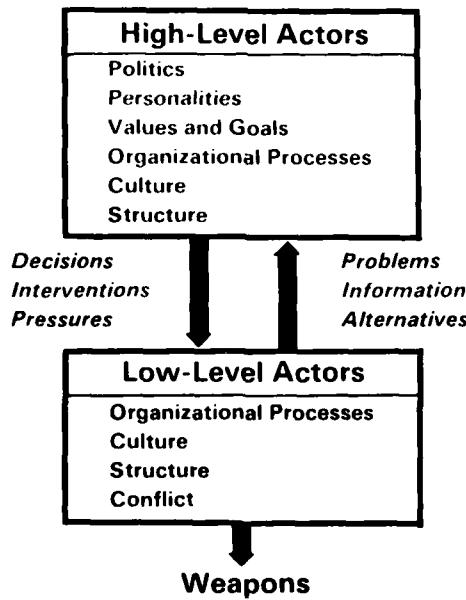


Figure 2. High- and low-level actions and interactions

The strong tendencies toward conservatism and inflexibility impel the high-level leadership into assuming the leading role as initiator of change. This is typically accomplished by way of interventions in the decision process. It is worthwhile here to consider several kinds of intervention or involvement by high-level leaders in operations. First, there are the routine, often trivial interventions that keep the system moving: for example, to relieve difficulties caused by problems crossing organizational boundaries; or to handle situations not covered by explicit delegation of authority. Many of these problems involve conflict between organizations that do not have the authority to resolve the issues at the lower levels. These organizations often possess the technical capabilities to accomplish their tasks, but the operation of the system throws problems upward for high-level resolution. An example is Stalin's sending Khrushchev in 1939 to clear up production problems in the rubber tire factories. (Khrushchev, 1970, pp. 119-125.)

A second kind of intervention is the review and approval of programs. These interventions are passive when all projects of a given type, meeting certain criteria, are reviewed by higher bodies; guidelines, for example, may be established that would direct investments larger than a certain size to be reviewed by the ministry collegium, or the Council of Ministers, or the Politburo. Such reviews could take place at a lower level; the review levels, established by custom or regulation, are therefore decision variables that can be changed according to the desire for intervention and control.

Active interventions reach down into the operating organizations to review programs because of some special consideration: perhaps because

of strategic sensitivity, or because a political figure is somehow entwined in the situation.

Another kind of intervention comes about from routine information gathering by high-level individuals: from visits to factories and institutes, newspaper reports, Party channels, KGB informants, or from suggestions and information sent to the Central Committee by citizens. Any good manager makes sure that he is not dependent only on the formal, hierarchical channels, but makes forays into the field to check things out for himself. Often, a manager is not looking for specific problems or malfeasance, but uses such informal methods to get the feel of the situation that formal reports do not often convey. Information derived in this way can lead to intervention in specific cases, but it also plays a role in keeping the official channels more honest and forthcoming.

Major decisions to move in new directions is the type of intervention usually analyzed by outside observers. They are important and visible. Examples are the major shift in agricultural investment in the mid-1960's, or the acceptance of a new political-military doctrine and its weapons procurement implications. These interventions are clearly political; the other types of interventions can also be political, especially if there are gainers and losers. Change itself can generate politics: new directions imply that old directions were wrong--and someone is to blame. New projects that improve efficiency imply that inefficiencies prevailed, and again, someone can be blamed. Strong forces, therefore, work against change, especially when they are likely to introduce politics into decisionmaking.

Despite the vast number of decisions reaching the Politburo, Council of Ministers, Central Committee Secretariat, or Military Industrial Commission demanding attention, an even larger number of routine decisions never leave the technical levels where they originate. Long-time participants in Soviet weapons procurement claim that although the important, exceptional, and non-routine issues are forced or are drawn to the top, the larger class of unexceptional projects remain in the hands of the managers. They point out, for example, that strategic systems may fall on the Politburo agenda, but that support systems, navigational systems, infantry weapons, etc., are handled by lower level technical organizations. It is therefore useful to know what is likely to go upward for decision and what will happen to it there; and what will be held at the lower levels, and the consequences arising therefrom.

The decisions, interventions, policies, or new directions that come out of the higher levels go forward for implementation, stimulating and initiating the organizational processes. Although the lower levels have the power to subvert, ignore, and otherwise modify the moves from on high, this power is quite asymmetrical. In any single case, the rulers can apply the necessary resources to accomplish their purpose. Their problem is that they have neither the resources nor the predilection to pay attention to every activity not moving the way they prefer. The lower levels, for their part, have the ability and often the incentive to send up advice, initiatives, and information, but these are received only at the pleasure of the potential audiences. The people at the top have the power to turn off the channel if they do not like, or are not

interested in what is being transmitted. The leadership can limit public debate, define the issues to be considered, and set the range of activities contemplated for policy consideration. They can open discussions and call forth ideas, and just as certainly cut off the flow when they have heard enough. However, they cannot receive alternatives that the bureaucracies are not prepared to deliver, unless there are such diverse sources of expertise that competition of ideas can take place. This is less likely to occur in military-industrial matters than in civilian, and even less likely in purely military issues where the General Staff prevails. A by-product of this process, as Gustafson notes, is that if new policy ideas flow only when the leadership is receptive, "then, when the official window is opened, they come in a flood, unrefined, unintegrated, and untested." (Gustafson, 1981, Chap. 10.) When this happens, there is little independent arguments from other sources, "so as to ask, How much is enough?" (Gustafson, 1981, Chap. 10.) One wonders whether this process could explain some of the presumed anomalies in Soviet weapons development: directed energy, for example.

Our analytical separation of actors forces us to ask questions about the frequency of key decisions from the top levels and their ability to implement them. It further raises the possibility of whether, indeed, most of the high-level activity is not simply caught up in the low-level routines--solving problems, resolving conflicts, approving or disapproving plans, or reviewing activities that the lower levels could do for themselves, but won't or are not allowed to.

Most outcomes are produced by small decisions, or even non-decisions. Nevertheless, in my own review of Soviet weapons procurement

decisionmaking, I am struck by the substantial redirection of resources under new regimes, and sometimes also at key points in existing regimes. There was a sharp demobilization of military production capability at the end of World War II, and a turn-around in 1949--both under Stalin. Khrushchev and his fellow politicians turned this phase off in 1954-55 when, for example, fighter aircraft production plummeted from more than 5000 per year to less than 500. In a still unexplained turn-around, conventional weapons production resumed an upward trend around 1960, which was reinforced by key Brezhnev decisions in 1965-66. Out of 11 types of conventional weapons, at least seven showed declining production rates in 1957, while only two showed rising trends. By the early 1960s, five were rising and only one was falling. These key decisions could only have been made at the top levels, and were most probably political decisions in that they involved conflicting goals. Between the decision points, however, the organizations took over. By and large, the specific types of weapons, their characteristics, technologies, unit costs, and capabilities were determined by individuals and thousands of sub-organizations operating in their own environment of constraints and incentives.

Doctrine, in the broad Soviet sense, is important in this context because it ties political and military views into a unified policy. It brings together both levels, enabling the lower level actors to proceed under the umbrella of agreed principles. But what if doctrine is contested or imposed, as under Khrushchev? Then the lower levels will fight the doctrine and resist it unless the leadership can push it forcefully, consistently, and with agreement among themselves. It would

also be necessary to couple the doctrine to a vigorous cadres policy and perhaps with some organizational restructuring. Without the forceful follow-through on contested doctrine, the cumulative impact of small bureaucratic decisions could deflect the high-level policy from its course.

Even when the lower levels basically accept a policy requiring considerable and complex interactions among the sub-organizations, local discretion operating under local incentives and routines is likely to lead events into unforeseen directions, requiring constant monitoring and continual high-level adjustments and fine-tuning through numerous interventions and decrees. Among groups, such as the military, whose functions and outlooks are very close to those of the political leadership--as they seem to be under Brezhnev--with little disagreement on basic doctrinal concepts, an approximation to autonomy is gained by the lower levels. However, even under these conditions, there is likely to be inconsistencies between doctrine and outcomes as policy is implemented in uncountable small actions. (Gustafson, 1981, Chap. 10.)

What then is the likelihood of major change in the political-military sphere, of new doctrine or sharply altered policy? The view put forward above of the interactions and behavior of the high and low levels can help us speculate on the conditions that would be necessary to enforce change, and on the consequences if the conditions were not forthcoming. Suppose, for example, that those who follow the Brezhnev generation wished to reallocate resources away from the military. I have already mentioned that the leadership would have to push such a policy forcefully, consistently, and with internal agreement. This last

requirement could take several years to achieve, as it did in the major redistribution seen in Soviet agriculture policy since 1965.[2] Even with such agreement, we should expect to find old habits dying rather slowly. Decades of experience under the old policy produced routines, norms, goals, values, and processes that enabled the old policies to be effected. Gosplan, for example, would routinely reallocate resources during the planning year to meet shortfalls in military production. Plans would be redrawn with only marginal changes from the preceding planning period, so that for a considerable period, considerable resources would continue to flow to old users. Managers who had grown up under the old system would continue to operate in much the same way as they had. Capable new managers attuned to the new goals would be difficult to find, despite the experience of the purges when a new generation was installed virtually overnight--today's technologies and management complexities would be less tolerant of such change than they were in the 1930s. Even if there were a policy shift, the military and military industry would still be an important sector, reflecting the no-doubt continued value of military force. Therefore, the sector could not be alienated and downgraded. A shift in priorities away from defense would perhaps be more difficult to accomplish than a new emphasis applied to a hitherto low-priority area. Soviet leaders have made the mobilization of political effort and economic resources in new programs into almost a routine method for reform. There has been less experience in the other--negative--direction, although the Stalin and

[2] Much of this discussion is derived from Thane Gustafson's review of agriculture reform.

Khrushchev phases of arms reduction did indeed achieve those ends.

Could a collective leadership in the future repeat that experience?

SOME QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

Organizational practices, cultural forces acting on individuals, and the way in which organizations are structured and relate functionally to one another strongly influence decisionmaking at both high and low levels--more so, of course at the lower levels. The very phrase "Soviet defense decisionmaking," however, throws these three sets of forces into an analytical melange. Key questions, therefore, include: how much of what we observe is organizational and bureaucratic, how much Soviet and Russian, and how much defense.

To what degree is Soviet defense decisionmaking characteristic of bureaucracies in general? Indeed, much of the preceding discussion in this paper could be applied with few amendments to United States government decisionmaking. Interviews with Soviet bureaucrats reveal little that people with experience in the Pentagon or elsewhere in the American military establishment have not seen. Yet, one can also discern nuances of behavior that are quite unlike the United States analogue: an example is the apparent unwillingness to compromise, emanating perhaps from the kto-kogo principle. Is it possible to disentangle the effects of bureaucracy, *per se*, from other forces, or to identify those common aspects of bureaucratic behavior that may be intensified or diminished in the Soviet environment?

Many studies have had an obligatory section on bureaucratic processes, and have often gone on to analyze the specific features of their cases in revealing detail. For example, Warner (1977), Spielman (1978), and Valenta (1979) include sections on bureaucratic politics and

behavior. The behavior that is described, however, is not compared to that found elsewhere in a manner that extends understanding of the particular case or of the general subject. There has been little surprise at what has been found, and therefore little advance in the refinement of theories. In the field of Soviet defense decisionmaking, the comparative viewpoint has not been addressed.

Cultural effects on Soviet bureaucratic processes, in most cases, have been alluded to only in passing. Crozier (1964, pp. 213-236), however, attempted a multi-cultural comparison of France, the United States, and the Soviet Union, but his focus was on bureaucratic behavior in general and not on the defense sector. Alexander's (1978/9, pp. 28-29) explorations in this area were no more than an initial foray to test the ground. This area appears to be both overdue for analysis and rewarding in its potential. For example, the likelihood of an individual or agency raising a new alternative in the face of expected opposition appears, generally, to be associated with deep-rooted views on personal conflict. The Soviet disinclination to generate new policies from below, and the consequent necessity of intervention from above may depend to a large degree on peculiar Russian cultural forces. Comparison with Eastern European practices may be a fruitful area for analysis because much of the Soviet organizational structure has been duplicated there, whereas the cultural effects would certainly be different. One study on Polish armaments decisionmaking (Checinski, 1980) was explicitly designed to use the Polish experience as a "window" on Soviet activities. This study, however, excluded the possibility of comparison because it deliberately assumed analogous behavior between Poland and

the Soviet Union.

Organizational structure is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Soviet defense sector that influences decisionmaking there and sets it apart from other areas of Soviet decisionmaking. We know a good deal about structure. The identity of the bureaucratic actors, their organizational affiliations, their missions, and their interrelationships have been fairly well delineated. Nevertheless, a group as seemingly important as the Defense Council is still shrouded in considerable uncertainty as to its day-to-day role, and even its membership. Despite these gaps (and they may be important), the sources of behavior arising from organizational structure should be amenable to analysis, and comparisons between Soviet defense and other Soviet sectors, or between Soviet and United States defense are feasible. For example, the information flows in sectors such as energy or agriculture are much broader and varied than in defense, where the military holds a strong monopoly over information. Policy formulation and decisionmaking in those other sectors should therefore include a larger number and greater variety of participants, with more vigorous debate, than in defense. In addition to structure, other features of defense set it apart from other sectors, but we are less able to ascertain the importance of these features. Technology, priority, secrecy, immediacy of threats, and historical values seem to influence behavior. However, it is difficult, analytically, to "hold other things constant" in order to measure the effects of these possible influences. Ofer (1980) makes a convincing argument that priority granted to defense industry significantly contributes to its capabilities and, by the same token, detracts from the

technological level of civilian industry. Moreover, he argues that priority can be granted and taken away; that it is not a natural feature of the defense sector. However, one could ask whether priority will maintain its previous role. Will defense technology in the future become so complex, and draw on so many sectors of Soviet science and industry that the customary management techniques and organizational structures would no longer be able to cope? Will anti-aircraft defense or anti-submarine warfare, for example, require the subtle integration of electronics, armaments, weapons platforms, and command and control--all of advanced technological levels that push against the frontiers of knowledge? Or will the Soviet military be able to make do as they have in the past by careful design and constrained use of technology? Can the vertically organized system of ministries and the central allocation of planned resources, even with priority and coordination, continue to function successfully? Comparative studies of the effects of structure can help answer these questions.

We have made much progress in understanding Soviet defense decisionmaking. Indeed, it is because of this progress that we are now at the stage where greater care is needed in the choice of alternative models to structure the available facts and to promote the search for new information. In particular, the scheme outlined above can help unify the several existing models used to explain decisionmaking. In the future, if we are able to identify the relative effects of organizational behavior, culture, and organizational structure, we will have advanced our understanding not only of Soviet defense decisionmaking, but of decisionmaking more generally.

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